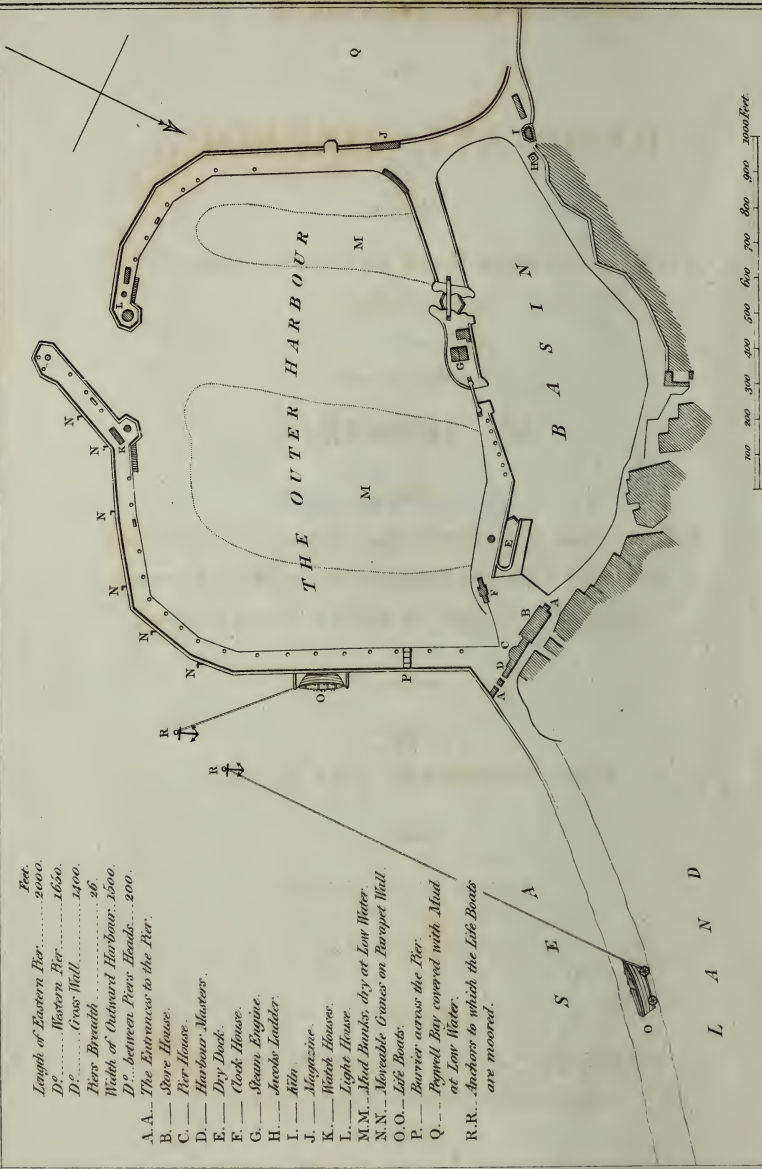


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PLAN OF RAMSGATE HARBOUR.

Feet.
 Length of Eastern Pier..... 2000.
 Do° Western Pier..... 1650.
 Do° Grass Wall..... 1400.
 Pier Breadth..... 26.
 Width of Outward Harbour: 1500.
 Do° between Piers Heads: 200.
 A.A. The Entrances to the Pier.

A. — Store House.
 B. — Pier House.
 C. — Harbour Masters.
 D. — Dry Dock.
 E. — Clock House.
 F. — Steam Engine.
 G. — Jacobs Ladder.
 H. — Ribs.
 I. — Magazine.
 J. — Watch House.
 K. — Light House.
 L.M. — Mud Banks, dry at Low Water.
 N.N. — Moveable Cranes on Parapet Wall.
 O.O. — Life Boats.
 P. — Barrier across the Pier.
 Q. — Poywell Bay covered with Mud at Low Water.
 R.R. — Anchors to which the Life Boats are moored.



REMARKS

ON

RAMSGATE HARBOUR,

SHOWING

*The Dangers to which Vessels are liable in a Gale of Wind
off that Shore:*

TO WHICH IS ADDED

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A Description of a Plan for the effectual Communication
between a Vessel in Distress and the Shore, by means
of firing off a Rocket, to which a Line is attached.

BY

J. W. SPRANGER, REAR ADMIRAL.

1,

“Magna est veritas et prævalebit.”

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEORGE WILSON,
CORNER OF ESSEX STREET, STRAND.

1821.

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

THE LATE

OF THE LATE

OF THE LATE

OF THE LATE

OF THE LATE

Printed by S. Gosnell, Little Queen Street, London.

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TO THE
COMMITTEE, DIRECTORS,
AND VISITORS,
OF
Ramsgate Harbour,

In hopes that some person of greater weight
than the Author will advocate the cause
of Sailors in Distress.

ALBANY,
February 1821.

R E M A R K S,

&c.

HAVING been so unfortunate as to witness the melancholy effects occasioned by the gale off Ramsgate on the 22d of October last, when seven vessels were wrecked behind the Pier, and at least fifteen men drowned, I could not, as a Flag Officer in His Majesty's navy, behold without emotion, such a scene of devastation. I therefore addressed a letter to Sir William Curtis, Bart. M. P. as Chairman of the Committee for managing the Harbour, containing my remarks on the subject, which I wished to be submitted to the serious consideration of the Board; but as I have not been honoured with an answer, and have not heard

that any effectual steps have been taken to guard against similar accidents in future, I feel myself bound to submit the tenour of them to an impartial and enlightened public.

In my letter of the 26th of October, I readily admitted that most of the ships were lost by not carrying sufficient sail, to get through the narrow entrance of Ramsgate Harbour, across the strength of the tide, which I think a capital fault in those having charge of the ships, and for which the gentlemen who have the management of the Pier are no ways answerable; but I took the liberty of stating, that having noticed the admission of the crowd to the number of five or six hundred, consisting of men, women, and children, I could not see the sailors impeded in their exertions to save their fellow-creatures, by such a promiscuous multitude, without being anxious to point out the absolute necessity of shutting the gates, and having a barrier placed across, to prevent the same confusion again occurring, when a ship should be in distress

behind the Pier ; and those who are acquainted with the locality, well know how easily this suggestion might be complied with.

I also added, that the public, who were already sufficiently clamorous at the annual expense laid out on the Harbour, have good reason to complain, if every care is not taken to prevent casualties; with such other observations as my experience in the sea service pointed out. I was particularly anxious to impress upon the minds of the gentlemen having the direction of Ramsgate Harbour, that besides excluding improper people, it would be advantageous, if the Pier should offer a premium for saving lives from a wreck ; which would act as a stimulus to impel others to risk their own persons ; and also that extra pay should be given to the Harbour Men when a ship is in danger. The men (say 24) should previously be divided into gangs of six, and called, one, two, three, and four, so that a certain number might be sent to assist the first ship on shore, and the rest be kept in

reserve, either to relieve that, or any other vessel in distress; and that none should be admitted on the Pier without a ticket previously given by the Harbour Master, which might be kept at the office ready for issuing; as also that he should be the sole judge of the rewards to be given for saving lives, which should be at the expense of the Pier.

It is no answer or excuse to the public to say, that the Humane Society does not extend so far, since the fund on tonnage, which nearly amounts annually to thirty thousand pounds, cannot be better employed than in providing the means of saving those, who might otherwise be lost in endeavouring to get into the Harbour.

For the same purpose two good Life-boats of the best and most improved construction, should be always kept ready for use. One might be triced upon high davits to the eastward or to leeward of the Pier, and lowered down with a proper crew when want-



ed. Frigates and ships of the line use double-banked six-oared cutters in a similar way, and put them into the water, even in bad weather, with all hands on board. The other life-boat might go upon wheels on the beach to the eastward, and both be covered up when not wanted; and the crew of each should have cork jackets, quilted in flannel, to go over their other dress, which is at once buoyant and protective against rocks, or pieces of the wreck: these also should be hung up in the Harbour Master's Office, and only given out when necessary. Good hawsers likewise, with an anchor, should be laid out in fine weather, in proper directions, to haul the life-boats out into deep water when wanted.

The parapet wall of the Pier should be furnished with several moveable Iron Cranes, with sheaves in the ends of them, so as to project beyond the wall, by which a chair, or slung basket, might be lowered into the ship; and life-ropes, with knots and buoys, should

be kept at hand to be thrown from the wall to the crew.

A Telegraph, as recommended by my friend Sir Thomas Staines, fitted with large letters, to express the most urgent directions, such as "Strip," and "Make for the Buoy," &c. &c. &c. would be infinitely better than the present method made use of by Lieutenant Woolward, the Harbour Master, of bawling through a trumpet, without being heard in a gale of wind.—Vide *Fig. 1*, opposite.

How far the plan shown to me of a man standing on a plank, level with the parapet, and heaving a lead into ships behind it, is practicable, seamen will judge; but in my opinion no man can face the sea which breaks in bad weather over the Pier, in such an elevated situation.

Proper Pilots for Ramsgate Harbour should pass an examination before competent persons; and it has been mentioned to the writer by an

Intended Form of Telegraphic Box.

Ft. In.
2 " 8

Ft. In.
1 " 6

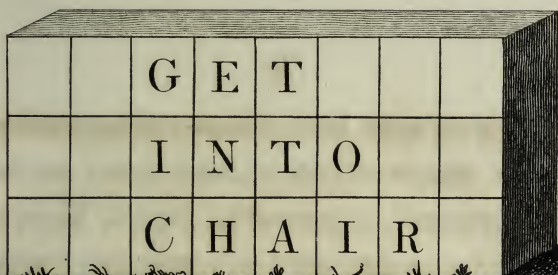


Fig. 1.

Each Letter 6 Inches by 4 in a Box with a handle behind to hold over the Parapet Wall.

Sentences mostly wanted.

Get into Chair.

Swim to Life Boat.

Take hold of Life Ropes.

Strip and Swim to nearest Buoy.

Stay in Vessel.

Barrier.

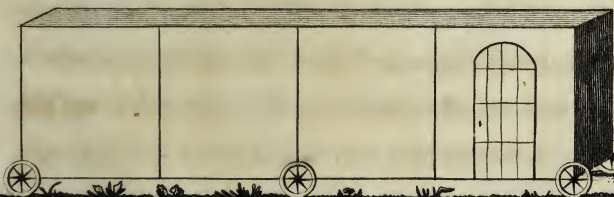


Fig. 2.

Form of intended Barrier to go back to Parapet Wall when not used, and may be made of Cast Iron 6 Feet by 6^{Inches}, with a small Door to admit one Person only.

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intelligent ship-owner, that after such examination, they should be furnished with a *branch*, which, of course, supersedes every other authority; and then those masters of vessels would be inexcusable who did not provide for themselves such a qualified pilot. It is true, the gentlemen of the Committee are bound to furnish ships on paying the duties at the Customs, with plain printed directions for entering Ramsgate Harbour in bad weather; but how far this is complied with, I have no opportunity of knowing; but am certain that it is not sufficient to say, that printed instructions are put up at the Custom House and Pier; and as every vessel of a certain tonnage pays passing the Downs, a form would cost but little, and should be delivered when the duties are received; but if masters do not, or will not, consult these directions in the *hour of danger*, the Committee are exonerated.

A Red Flag should be kept flying on the weather Pier Head, to direct ships, according to the tide and wind, to keep to windward;

and notice should be sent to the shipping, that such is the intention in future; and as the flood tide sets strong round Pegwell Bay, to the northward, and ships generally come in with this tide, a Red Flag has only to be shown at the Light-house, and a flag-staff might easily be erected, if necessary, and the same flag hoisted on the entrance of the southern Pier Head, when that is the weather side. In short, having, as I before observed, witnessed with considerable emotion the loss of so many men, I cannot help thus publicly giving it as my opinion, that several lives might have been saved, if proper arrangements and previous measures had been taken. I cannot but disapprove of the multitude of idle spectators who are permitted to crowd the Pier during a wreck, to the hinderance of those who are usefully employed. I strongly recommend that extra pay and rewards, at the discretion of the Harbour Master, and expense of the Funds, should be given, for saving lives; and I advise dividing the Harbour Men into gangs, and mustering them

as such in fine weather, and only admitting them in bad, by tickets previously given, or lying ready for them at the office; and I strongly call upon the gentlemen having the direction of the Harbour, to provide immediately two good Life-boats, as well as dresses for the crews, such as have been described, and that the parapet should be furnished with several moveable Cranes to afford assistance to ships in distress.

And though I was introduced by a gentleman of great weight and fortune to the leading man of the Harbour, yet I perceive the truth and justice of the Satirist's remark,

“ Et genus, et virtus, nisi cum re, vilior algâ est ;”

and to the public, therefore, I make my appeal, which will estimate the yearly loss of lives, and the sums which are annually paid to the Harbour, wishing that it should determine whether every precaution ought not to be taken by the Committee to guard against similar accidents. Parties coming from the

Continent are liable to be wrecked behind the Pier, and are, therefore, interested in making the approach to Ramsgate as safe as possible.

In short, for a much less loss than I saw on the 22d of October, I would have fought a good action and been made a K. C. B. in my profession; and seeing such enormous sums lavished to little or no purpose on the Pier, and, at the same time, no precautions taken to obviate casualties, I cannot refrain from offering my mite towards rectifying what I consider a mismanagement and misapplication of the Funds. Happy should my humble efforts be attended to, or at least rouse the attention of some more powerful person than myself; and happier still, should I in any way be instrumental to saving the life of a brother Sailor in distress.

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APPENDIX.

HAVING witnessed and tried with success Mr. Tregrouse's Plan of saving People out of a Wreck, I am induced to give the outline of it here.

The Invention of Mr. Tregrouse, of the West of England, which, for simplicity, portability, and effect, in saving men's lives out of a wreck, exceeds every thing I am acquainted with—consists in about a mile of stout mackerel-line coiled as sailors ball up spun-yarn, using the inner end of each ball, which are to be united together, and one end firmly fixed to the tail of a rocket, and fired out of a common musket, to the shore from the vessel wrecked, or over her from the shore, so as in either case the line is got hold of by the spectators—to which must be

attached a larger rope (say one inch), and to that one sufficiently strong to bear with ease the men's weight (say a four-inch rope), and to that a traversing or sliding chair, in which the men may be placed, and be pulled on shore, and the chair, by means of a small out-hauler, returned to the vessel, till all the people are saved.

The rope on which the chair traverses must be made fast on board the wreck, and hauled taught and belayed on shore, and furnished with two small ropes to pull it backwards and forwards, and rollers to work on the great rope or hawser, or on a large iron thimble.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind of masters of merchant-ships, that the apparatus here mentioned is *simple, cheap, and goes in a chest in a small compass*; and as the means of saving their own and the lives of their crew, should be fitted before-

hand, and constantly kept in the cabin for use when wanted.

A rocket (of not less than a pound, or greater, according to the distance from the shore) to be inserted in the mouth of the piece, and fitted with a copper ladle to fix in it like a bayonet, to keep the rocket in its place, and the tail by the side of the musket.

The musket should be loaded in the ordinary way, with powder only, and fitted on Mr. Egg's principle—the cock to go off in wet weather, or under water, by percussion and fulminating powder. The charge should be considerably reduced, as it is only intended to ignite the rocket, the velocity of which carries the line on shore. A common musket will answer, if Mr. Egg's cannot be procured.

N. B. Captains of ships should take care that the rockets are good, as the success of the experiment depends upon their going on shore. No stars should be in them, as the

object is to carry as far as possible, and to catch fire readily.

But having found the back fire from a large rocket, when discharged out of a musket, was too strong, and likely to cause *many and serious accidents*, I strongly recommend having a chest, which contains the line and chair, so as to make a frame of the lid from which the rocket is flung at any angle.

The chest should open at one end, instead of the side, with good hinges, and the frame which is formed from the cover at the other, with smaller ones, and be kept when used perpendicular, with a round notch in the centre for the rocket, by two irons and hooks in the lid; and when not wanted, the irons fasten into two staples, so as to allow the lid to shut like an ordinary chest.

The elevation of the lid is managed by two pieces of deal which fall into elm notches at the sides, and pack up within the chest; and

the elm boards support the cover. If a small angle is wanted, one of the slips of deal is placed edgeways under it.

I have used an elm board for the chair, sufficiently strong to bear the weight of four men back to back, and the chair being slung, and lying on ledges in the chest, over the lines which are placed in cribs of twelve inches in the clear, to prevent the balls from rolling or being displaced by any accident.

The port fire lies in thumb-cleats by the side, and is so strong that it will burn in any weather, and even under water.

The rockets should be carefully slung with copper wire, to prevent the line being burnt, and the wire stopped behind the stick and come out at the end of the tail, by means of a gimlet-hole, and the line fastened to it. The wire should embrace the head of the rocket, and go with a half-hitch round the lower part, and take in the stick, as the under

seizing is apt to be burnt, and the tail become loose.

In short, every thing is ready for use except ropes and rockets, which are to be found in every ship, and the latter triced up betwixt the beams in the cabin, and the chest makes an excellent seat, and ought to be secured under the Captain's table.

This plan differs materially from Captain Manby's, which, though excellent as far as it goes, supposes the ship to come on shore opposite or near the gun, and the line to be flung to windward over her; whereas a ship may be beat to pieces before the apparatus is ready, and the line may miss; but, in Mr. Tregrouses's, every vessel carries, at all times and places, the means of *salvation* in her power; and the mackerel-line, if near, is sure to reach, as the shore is always to leeward of her.

If more than one rope is used for the sliding chair, they should be spliced together, to allow the roller or iron thimble to traverse with ease over them.

The great object in all cases of wreck is to establish a speedy and certain communication with the shore; and the accompanying is an extract from Captain Hervey's letter to me, who was one of the Lieutenants of the Apollo.

“ Sandwich, Dec. 13, 1820.

“ The Apollo struck on the coast of Portugal, on Monday, the 2d of April 1804, at half past three A. M.; and by eight A. M. she was entirely under water, except the larboard bow, on which the crew got. The sea, and no inhabitants on the beach, prevented any communication that day. The following day, the writer and about thirty men, several being drowned in the attempt, succeeded in getting on shore by spars from

“ a merchant-ship, and got out her launch,
 “ which, being coppered and heavy, could
 “ not get through the surf; but am of opi-
 “ nion, that had Mr. Tregrouse’s apparatus
 “ been on board any of the merchant-men,
 “ we could have got a rope to the wreck, and
 “ hauled the empty boat through the sea, as
 “ the Apollo was not more than two cables
 “ from the shore, instead of staying till Wed-
 “ nesday, although moderate; by which Cap-
 “ tain Dixon and about forty men would have
 “ been saved. The men stayed on the bow
 “ without victuals from Monday till Wednes-
 “ day, and our loss was sixty-one, besides
 “ some who died afterwards from fatigue.”

N. B. The rockets with copper wire slung
 ready for use in cases, may be purchased at
 the lowest price, and to be depended on,
 of Mr. Quantrail, Fire Artist, Enfield; or of
 Mr. Hengler, No. 4, Westminster Road.

EXPENSE.

	£.	s.	d.
Mackerel-line - - - - -	3	0	0
Chair of elm plank and ropes -	0	15	0
Rockets - - - - -	0	4	0
Chest with a hole in, to stay in			
Master's cabin - - - - -	2	10	0
	<hr/>		
	6	9	0
	<hr/>		

N. B. The above is what I paid; but the cost would be considerably less if made on board a ship.

THE END.

THE moveable iron crane, which, with the upright, should be about seven feet in the clear above the parapet wall, ought to be two inches in the square, with a sheave in the end.

The span over the wall four inches wide, by five eighths of an inch thick, and a transverse bolt to go through the iron span on both sides of the wall.

	£.	s.	d.
Weight of crane made of beat iron, 130 lbs. costs about - }	3	5	0
Iron bottom to chair, 40 lbs. costs	1	0	0
Four men, 12 stone each, in the chair, half a ton, or equal to one pipe of wine - - - }	One pipe of wine.		

Holes at proper intervals for the moveable cranes, should be perforated through the pa-

rapet wall. The cranes may remain on the wall in fine, ready to shift in bad weather, where requisite.

The chair, or slung basket, should have a block seized in at the top, and a tackle reeved in it when wanted, and one end go through the sheave in the crane, and the standing part made fast round it.

A leading snatch-block to take the fall ought to hook on at the foot of the parapet wall, so that the men would be sheltered from the sea.

THE END.

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